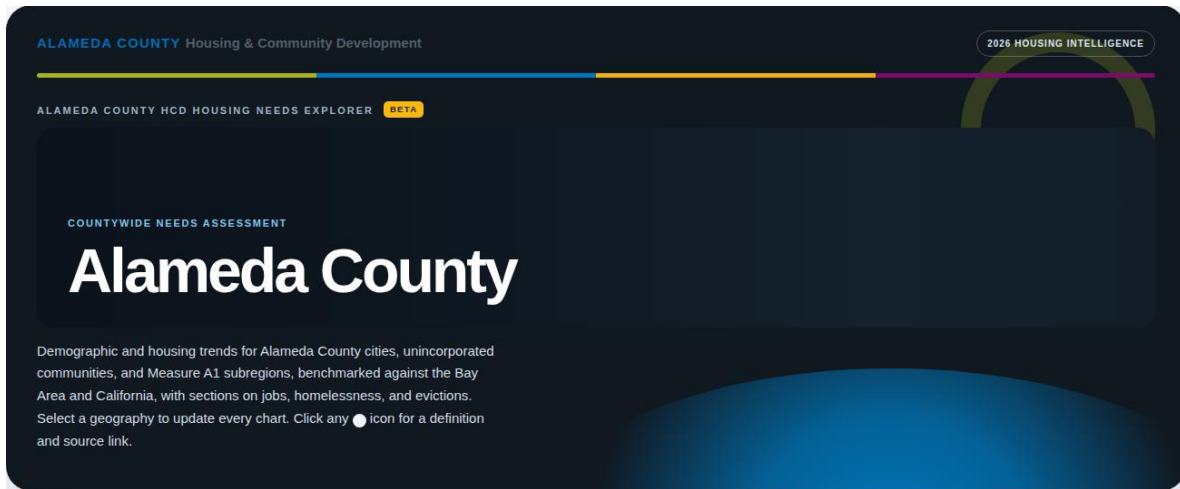


ISSUE BRIEF

The Housing Needs Explorer

An interactive tool for exploring housing conditions in Alameda County, its 14 cities, and its unincorporated communities



HOME IS HERE

Everyone who cares about housing in our community is better served by working from a common understanding of the facts on the ground. The Housing Needs Explorer puts population, housing cost, production, and homelessness data in one place, so residents, advocates, and policymakers can tell the same story from the same evidence.

17

geographies covered

379

census tracts available for neighborhood-level analysis

20+

federal, state, local, and academic data sources

Why We Built It

No matter the audience, our housing conversations are better when everyone is working from the same understanding of the facts on the ground. Previously, our city councils, government staff, developers, service providers, advocates, and residents at a public comment microphone have had to gather this information from a scattered set of dashboards, census tables, and government reports. While the information has been available, assembling it takes expertise most people do not have time to build.

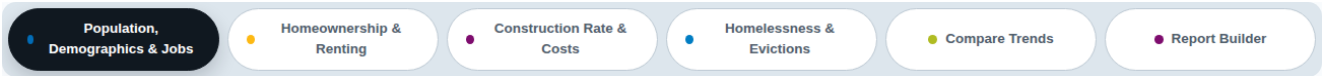
The Housing Needs Explorer is designed to close that gap. It presents the indicators in our Housing Needs Assessment (initially released in 2023) through an interface that requires no technical background, covers every jurisdiction in the County, and lets any user export what they need. Our goal is to empower problem solvers in our communities with the easy to use, high-quality information they need to support effective housing solutions.

If the story of our housing needs is told using a consistent and common set of facts, our neighbors can better see the challenges we face and the impact of their tax dollars.

How to Use the Explorer

The Explorer brings the County's housing picture into one place: population & jobs, homeownership & renting, construction & Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) progress, and homelessness & evictions. Everything on screen updates to the jurisdiction you select, and everything you see can be exported.

1. Getting around



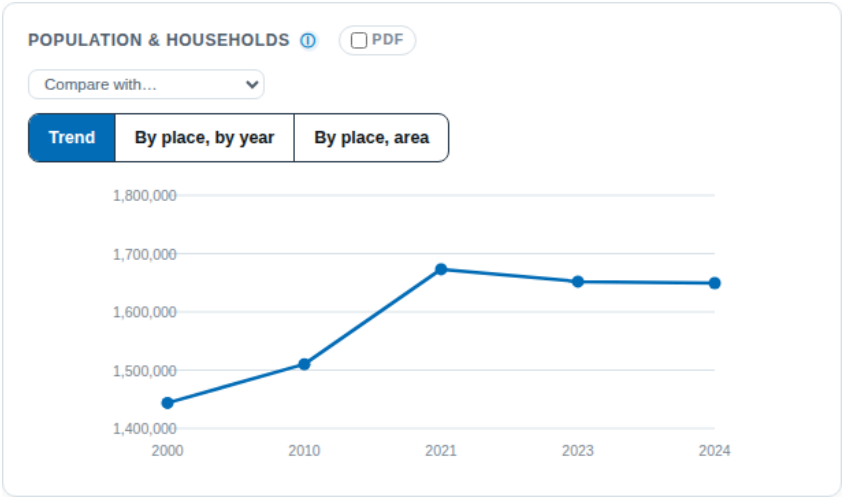
Six tabs organize the dashboard, the first four are data sections. Each opens with a row of key terms you can hover for plain-language definitions, a short narrative of what matters, and then the charts and maps. Compare Trends and Report Builder are tools, covered below. Every chart title includes a small circled-i icon: hover for a definition of the measure and a link to the original source or data hosting service.

2. Pick a jurisdiction, download its data



The geography bar stays pinned to the top as you scroll. Choose any city, unincorporated community, the County, the Bay Area, or California, and every chart, map, and narrative number follows. Maps zoom automatically to your selection. The Download menu exports the full indicator set for the current geography, a census tract file, or a data dictionary documenting every indicator with its vintage and source.

3. Reading the charts



Hover on any chart element or key term for the underlying figures or a definition. Where percentages are shown, the tooltip also gives the estimated count of people, households, or units behind them. On the maps, a census tract view is available in the display dropdown. Tracts drawn with dotted outlines carry margins of error above 40 percent of the estimate and should be read as indicative only. Small geographies carry wider margins throughout.



4. Comparing any two metrics



The Compare Trends tab plots any two indicators from the entire dashboard against each other over time. Preset pairings cover the questions staff ask most, and two dropdowns let you build your own. Two display modes are available: separate left and right axes for unlike units, or an indexed view that sets both series to 100 at the first shared year so growth rates compare directly. Most individual charts also carry a Compare With menu that overlays another jurisdiction in a contrasting color.

5. Building a report

CHOOSE VISUALIZATIONS 3 SELECTED

Population, Demographics & Jobs

- ☒ Map: Population & Demographics
- ☐ Age Distribution
- ☐ Bachelor's Degree or Higher
- ☐ Income Distribution
- ☐ Unemployment Rate, 2000–2026
- ☒ Population & Households
- ☐ Race & Ethnicity, latest
- ☐ Household Composition, 2000 vs. latest
- ☐ Median Income by Tenure (2024\$)
- ☐ Employment by Industry
- ☐ Senior & Child Households Over Time
- ☐ Race & Ethnicity, 2000 vs. latest
- ☐ Households with Children / Seniors
- ☐ Households Below Poverty Level
- ☐ Average Household Size
- ☐ Educational Attainment
- ☐ Median Household Income (2024\$)
- ☐ Gini Index (Income Inequality)

Homeownership & Renting

Construction Rate & Costs

Homelessness & Evictions

Compare Trends

[Generate PDF report](#) Opens your browser's print dialog; choose "Save as PDF".

The Report Builder assembles a briefing document from any set of visualizations, anchored to the jurisdiction in the geography bar. Tick items in the catalog, or use the small PDF checkbox beside every chart title as you browse; the two stay in sync. Charts export exactly as configured, including compare selections and view toggles, and maps export at their current zoom with a caption naming the variable shown. Generate opens your browser's print dialog; choose Save as PDF as the destination. The report carries the jurisdiction banner as its cover, the generation date, and a sources line.

GOOD TO KNOW

Data vintages and caveats. Every figure's source, vintage, and known limitations are documented in the Data Notes and Sources panel at the bottom of the dashboard. Charts marked with dashed placeholders are wired and waiting on a data retrieval; they will populate in a future update.

This is a BETA release. The Explorer is a working tool under active development and will be updated continuously. Verify all figures against the sources shown before citing them.

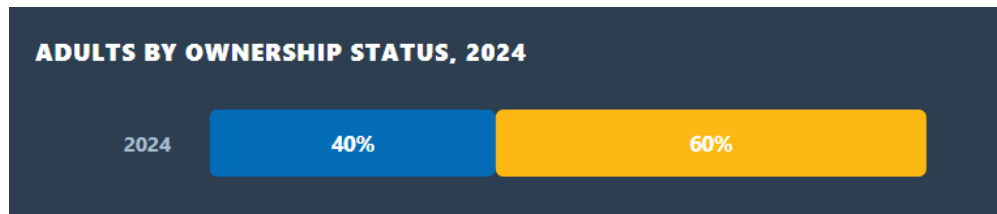
Tell us what you find. The feedback link at the top of the dashboard goes to the Alameda County data product feedback form. Anything you notice, from a data question to a confusing label, is welcome there.

Beyond the Indicators

Throughout the Explorer, sections marked *Beyond the Indicators* carry deeper analysis. These features offer evidence for complex dynamics that single-metric indicators can obscure. This is an early attempt to localize scholarly research and make those dynamics legible and accessible. Three findings are worth highlighting here.

FINDING 01 Most residents are not homeowners

In Alameda County, 54.4% of homes are owner-occupied. While we could understand this to mean that most residents are homeowners, this interpretation gives us a false view of our communities housing. The measure counts homes, not people, and not everyone living in an owner-occupied home is themselves an owner. The Explorer disaggregates this through an alternative measure, the homeownership to population ratio, which counts people rather than buildings.

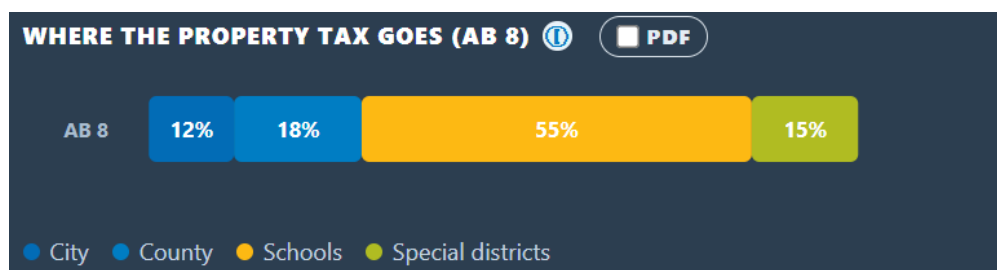


By the HPOP measure, 60% of adults in our County do not own their home, meaning they live in intergenerational or communal households with a homeowner or as renters. When housing production lags, we push rents up on the majority of our community who rely on others for their housing, making it harder for those who want to rent to find affordable homes and pricing out those who want to jump from non-owner to owner. Housing policy that reflects the needs of the majority of our community should weight resources toward non-homeowners accordingly.

FINDING 02 Building housing pays the County back

Every eight years the State and regional government assign each city and county a housing production goal through the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). Our County's allocation reflects current and anticipated need, how many households struggle to pay for housing or have low incomes, and projected growth.

This RHNA target is usually discussed as a burden, but we rarely fully acknowledge the benefits these new units bring. Meeting our RHNA goals doesn't just mean adding housing, it also means generating revenue for schools and local government without raising tax rates. The Explorer lets you model that value for any jurisdiction.



Putting the benefit in monetary terms gives stakeholders a new dimension for evaluating housing production. Building thousands of new homes is an intimidating task, which may require new funding, zoning changes, and infrastructure, but it is also an investment in the financial sustainability of our communities with a significant return on our investment. To tell an accurate story about the housing needs and goals of our County, we have to highlight these benefits clearly and consistently.

FINDING 03 Homelessness is a housing problem

Conversations about homelessness are frequently knocked off course by unfounded, but pervasive, claims about its root cause. Regional problems have regional causes, and our region's homelessness follows from a sustained shortage of housing. Drawing on the work of Gregg Colburn and Clayton Page Aldern, the Explorer offers evidence for why some communities, including ours, see much higher rates of homelessness than others.



Rent levels track homelessness rates across counties. Alameda County is labeled on the scatter, and the model responds as you move the rent slider.

Insufficient supply has pushed rents up and vacancy rates down. These high rents make it difficult for at-risk residents to keep up with costs, while a lack of alternative homes ensures any loss of housing is more likely to lead to homelessness. The drivers of our homelessness crisis are the predictable consequence of high demand and rising average incomes paired with chronic underbuilding. Every community has poor and vulnerable residents; our County's *scarcity* is what makes it so hard for those residents to stay housed.

While addiction, poverty, discrimination, and psychological distress do help explain who becomes homeless at an individual scale, they are not the drivers of our County's high rate of homelessness. Building more housing is the response that stabilizes rents and returns vacancy to a healthy level, allowing more vulnerable people to stay housed. Grounding the discussion in evidence lets us focus on solutions that serve the whole community rather than marginalize the most vulnerable.

What You Can Do With It

- ▲ **Pull the numbers for your city** before a council meeting, a grant application, or a public comment, and export them as a spreadsheet or a report.
- ▲ **Cite it in your own materials.** Every indicator carries its source and vintage, and the data dictionary download documents the full set.
- ▲ **Tell us what is missing.** The feedback form is linked at the top of the dashboard, and this tool will keep expanding as new evidence and research emerge.

HCD offers the Housing Needs Explorer as a resource for evidence-based problem solving on this issue. Solutions will take collaboration across the public, private, and civil sectors, grounded in common facts and shared understanding. We hope this tool helps that work.

Stronger and thriving communities start with a safe and secure place to call home.



Alameda County Housing & Community Development
Contact: Stefani Katz, Stefani.Katz@acgov.org



Alameda County Community Development Agency
224 W. Winton Ave., Suite 108, Hayward, CA 94544 · 510.670.5404